



BOARD OF CORRECTIONS MEETING – MARCH 2015

Meeting. The Board of Corrections met March 6, 2015, in Des Moines. Acting Director Jerry Bartruff welcomed the Board and provided a brief update of initiatives by the Department of Corrections ([DOC](#)). Director of Research Lettie Prell provided a summary of legislation that may impact the DOC and be of interest to the Board.

Restrictive Housing. Staff at the Iowa Medical Classification Center (IMCC) at Oakdale has been working on the reduction of restrictive housing. Medical Services Director Dr. Deol, IMCC Treatment Services Director Scott Eschen, and IMCC Psychologist Bo Pourahmadi presented information regarding:

- National and State trends for prison population growth, prison medical care spending, and mental illness within the population.
- Various types of segregation, including administrative segregation, disciplinary detention, and protective custody.
- Levels of care for offenders, including acute, subacute, intensive outpatient, and general population.
- Serious Mental Illness (SMI) includes schizophrenia and psychotic disorders, major depression, bipolar disorders, and organic brain syndrome.

Treatment Team. The DOC and IMCC created a multidisciplinary team to review the disciplinary process to address mental health of inmates. Offenders with SMIs tend to engage in behavior, such as verbal aggression, that results in disciplinary action such as detention or segregation from the general population. Generally, the mental health of offenders deteriorates in detention. The multidisciplinary team focuses on:

- Developing a mental health care plan to understand the offenders' diagnoses.
- Identifying goals to manage the symptoms of the diagnoses.
- Reviewing medications.
- Enhancing coping skills, reinforcing positive interactions and behaviors.
- Rewarding behavior by progressively adding privileges.

Results. This process has reduced:

- The use of disciplinary reports and restrictive housing.
- The number of hospital trips due to self-harm.
- The number of days offenders stay in the acute unit at IMCC.
- The use-of-force incidents.

Cultural Change. The DOC is using offenders as mentors to build trust, positive relationships, and improve communications. The DOC has partnered with the National Association for the Mentally Ill ([NAMI](#)) – Iowa to provide mental health training and awareness to staff. The DOC implemented a mental health disciplinary assessment policy. Changing the focus from discipline to positive feedback requires participation at all levels of the Institution, from the warden to the front line correctional officers. Staff input has been encouraged and the labor-management meetings have been utilized.

Board Discussion. The Board discussed its role and duties. The development of an operations manual for the Board may be helpful, especially when new members come onto the Board. The Board also discussed the [Office of the Ombudsman report](#) released February 16, 2015, regarding an incident at the Fort Dodge Correctional Facility in 2008. The Board queried DOC staff on the use of Administrative Law Judges (ALJs) and their independence. The ALJs are appointed by the DOC Director, not the wardens. The ALJs are supervised by General Counsel Michael Savala. The DOC staff indicated policies and procedures have changed since the incident occurred. The Board also queried the DOC staff on the new maximum security prison at Fort Madison, its construction, and legislative interest.

Next Meeting. The Board is scheduled to meet April 10 at the new Iowa State Penitentiary at Fort Madison. The Board plans to tour the current prison after that meeting. See the DOC website for more information: <http://www.doc.state.ia.us/>.

STAFF CONTACT: Beth Lenstra (515-281-6301) beth.lenstra@legis.iowa.gov